



## WATER SPORT REPORT - #2

July 2017

### Keeping you Posted

Freediving interests amongst our readers number as long as a proverbial arm. This update will mention some of their activities, both current and planned, as well as participants and supporters.

*Snapper in the Wellington region.* The previous *Water Sports Report* showed a snapper speared at Kapiti Island and it drew comments about more snapper being speared around Wellington and its west coast. We were asked by various people why that might be so? Here is some feedback. With falling catch rates earlier this century, the area of the North Island's west coast had its Total Allowable Catch (that's largely what was taken commercially) reduced in 2005. It is steadily having an effect. The **Status of NZ Fisheries Report 2016** issued by MPI (Fisheries) in February of this year notes that the "2015 assessment for snapper along the north and west coast of the South Island showed that it had increased substantially in size in recent years and was now well above its biomass limits and approaching its management target." Both Wellington and its west coast divers may yet see further improvement in catch rates when the management target is attained.

*Stewart Island's cage diving with white pointer sharks.* Where to from here? Some readers will have seen the High Court ruling stating that the Department of Conservation under present legislation, should not have granted permission to shark-diving operators. That decision has pleased one section of those concerned and not others. Stewart Island residents and Paua divers are amongst those who say that baiting up for cage diving has made the sharks more aggressive. Cage diving operators disagree, and DOC notes a report by an Australian scientist saying it was unlikely their behaviour was changing. However, spearfishers elsewhere around NZ have wondered about the accuracy of that Australian assessment when in recent years an increase in the number of people spearing and losing fish has coincided with some sharks showing changes in aggressive behaviour. 'Conditioning,' via the reward of food can be a powerful stimulus for changes in behaviour. Indeed, there are reported diving areas in NZ where just the firing of a speargun (even if no fish is speared) has bronze whalers quickly confronting divers and taking fish if it is available off the spear or a towed float.

*PADI Women's Dive Day, July 15.* Check with your local dive shop what they might be planning as support for the female dive community.

*Team CRESSI Nights.* Top exponents of spearfishing and freediving, Julian Hansford and Dave Mullins respectively, drew good numbers to their recent public speaking evenings in the Wellington region. Hosted separately by the Kapiti Underwater Club, Dive Wellington at Island Bay, and Petone Dive & Ski, (see photo opposite) the speakers talked of the challenges and preparation required for competing amongst the elite in their respective disciplines. Perhaps unsurprisingly given that the audiences were divers, a good number of the questions asked involved equalising and overcoming its associated problems. Chris Phelps who attended the Petone Dive & Ski meeting was the winner of the (\$899) Drake Dive Computer watch drawn from the names of all those attending one or other of the Team CRESSI nights.



*Ripples Expo 2018.* Julian and Dave, like hundreds of other divers are representative of the crossover between various freediving activities. That inter meshing of skills is a common factor in the activities set down for a Ripples Expo in 2018. Signage for the event is evident in the photo taken at the Kapiti Underwater Club's evening. 'Ripples' is more than an Expo though. Its supporters have gathered together an impressive range of local and national sponsors all with a view of promoting freediving related events.



*Left to right, David Mullins, Malcolm Bird, Richard Campbell (Vice President, Kapiti Underwater Club) and Julian Hansford.*

**Wellington**

Ripples extends across all Apnea sports: Underwater Rugby, Underwater Hockey, Freediving and Spearfishing across all levels from juniors and grassroots through to elite athletes and teams.

The aim is to raise awareness of the sports and make a difference to all divers through funding, education, awareness and promotion.

Ripples encourages the cross-engagement between Apnea codes to increase skills, fitness, and community, and lobby on behalf of all divers for pool and open water safety (for example diver awareness signs at boat ramps and safety procedures at pools).

Ripples wants to make a difference to you and the wider diving community through expos, workshops, and grants.

**Ripples Mission Statement and where it relates to your diving interest.**

*CRESSI Spearfishing Team.* Mentioned in the last **Water Sports Report** the overseas members of this team from Portugal and Greece now have an itinerary awaiting final confirmation. At this stage they will arrive in NZ on January 5<sup>th</sup>. They will first be hosted for a few days by Julian Hansford as they spear fish in the Coromandel and then move on to Great Barrier Island to team up and compete with their NZ partners at the National Spearfishing Championships. Once that event is over they head to Wellington for 5 days before going back to Auckland on the 29<sup>th</sup> for return flights home. More details will follow.

*Wellington Snapper: An anecdote* Mentioned at the beginning of this Report was the Kapiti Island snapper speared last summer. Baiting up with kina or diced fish is now a popular method of attracting snapper when they are around. Years ago though before the stock was over-fished, “Snapper Bay” so named at the northern end of Kapiti Island’s Boulder Bank could be every bit as ‘fishy’ as some well-known spots in the Far North of NZ. A swim through the bay would generally find a snapper or two in caves or under ledges all without the aid of berley. Indeed, you could unexpectedly run into snapper anywhere around the Wellington region’s coastline, and big fish they often were. For interest’s sake here is the true story of one such encounter.

*Location: Tarakena Bay, (less affectionately known at the time as ‘Lavender Bay’ due to the smell from the Bay’s sewage outfall,) and it is the boat launching site on Moa Point Road on Wellington’s south coast. In the days before the current wide ramp was established by the Council and Airport Authority for emergency purposes, boats had to launch at the other end of the sandy beach underneath the now stairway up to the Atatürk Memorial. On this particular occasion divers returned from a Club dive and with a struggle had hauled the boat out of the water up the then narrow concrete ramp that was covered by several centimetres of soft sand and had then changed into their clothes. At that point the skipper found a butterfish in the boat that had escaped earlier cleaning of fish out at sea, so he cleaned it and tossed pieces of the guts back into shallow water on the ramp. Dorsal spines appeared! An opportunistic snapper moved in over the sand covered ramp. “I can get that!” was the cry as a shirt was discarded, mask and snorkel hurriedly put on, speargun loaded, and lying on water’s edge, burying chin in the sand deep enough to see underwater through the mask there was the snapper. A quick shot, then standing up with feet still dry, the snapper was pulled ashore. 18 lbs/8.1kg. The biggest speared in the Club that year.... until it was decided that because the diver was not in the water it did not count. Damn! But he still has a good story.*

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*Distribution of this **CRESSI Water Sport Report** is by CRESSI, various commercial outlets, as well as dive clubs in the Wellington region. Questions or general feedback should be sent to [dean@cressi.co.nz](mailto:dean@cressi.co.nz)*